

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 090935 Z JUN 73

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2585

S E C R E T BEIRUT 6772

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: MASS, LE, US

SUBJECT: 155 MM GUNS

REF: A. STATE 109512

B. BEIRUT 6039 24 MAY 73

1. EMBASSY DISTURBED BY POSSIBILITY REFLECTED STATEMENT PARA 2, REF A, THAT USG MIGHT BE UNWILLING TO SELL 155 MM GUNS TO GOL. IN ADDITION TO PARA 1 B, REF B, THE RECENT FIGHTING AGAINST THE FEDAYEEN AND UNITS FROM SYRIA EMPHASIZES THE NEED FOR 155 MM GUNS FOR THE LEBANESE ARMY. WE KNOW THE FEDAYEEN POSSESS 120 MM MORTARS BUT MORE IMPORTANT THE PALESTININA LOBERATION ARMY (PLA) POSSESSES ARTILLERY AS WAS EVIDENCED BY SHELLING OF LEBANON FROM SYRIA BY 130 MM GUNS DURING RECENT CRISIS. WE SUSPECT IT WAS PLA ARTILLERY, HOWEVER, REGARDLESS OF SOURCE, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT LEBANESE HAVEA CAPABILITY TO RETALIATE.

2. THE DCSOP TOLD DATT THAT ONE REASON THE ARMY RECEIVES SO MUCH OPPOSITION FORM THE POLITICAINS IS BECAUSE WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT PURCHASED ARE NOT FOR USE AGAINST ISRAEL BUT PURELY FOR DESTROYING THE FEDAYEEN. BY ASKING FOR HEAVY EQUIPMENT SUCH AS 155 MM GUNS, M-60 TANKS AND AIRCRAFT THE ARMY NOT ONLY PLACATES THE POLITICAIAINS BY SAYING THE WEAPONS ARE FOR DEFENSE AGAINST ISRAEL BUT GIVES THE ARMY THE REQUIRED WEASPONS TO INCREASE THEIR CAPABILITY AGAINST THE FEDAYEEN, PLA AND/ OR SYRIA.

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3. WE FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THE HESITANCY OF THE U. S. TO SUPPLY THESE WEAPONS TO LEBANESE PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE RECENT FIGHTING WHICH DID INVOLVE UNITS FROM SYRIA. GIVEN LEBANON' S TRADITIONAL POLICY OF AVOIDING CONFLICT WITH ISRAEL FOR A VARIETY OF VALID REASON S,

WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE ACQUISITION OF THESE WEAPONS BY THE LEBANESE WILL AFFECT THE BALANCE WITH ISRAEL OR PUT THAT COUNTRY IN ANY JEOPARDY. TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, LEBANESE ARMY HAS NEVER AT ANY TIME OVER PAST 25 YEARS FIRED EVEN SINGLE ROUND INTO ISRAEL OR ISRAELI- OCCUPIED TERRITORY. IF USG WILLING PROVIDE 155 MM GUNS TO JORDAN AND AIRCRAFT WITH BOMB- CARRING CAPABILITY TO SEVERAL ARAB STATES, WE UNABLE SEE RATIONALE FOR REFUSING SUPPLY 155 MM GUNS TO LEBANON.
HOUGHTON

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